



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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North Dakota Physicians Testing for Measles *Department of Health Reminds North Dakotans of the Importance of Measles Vaccination*

BISMARCK, N.D. – Although no measles cases have yet been identified in North Dakota this year, physicians in North Dakota have identified three suspect cases and have submitted samples to the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) for testing. Two have tested negative and results are pending on the other. The pending case is under investigation by the North Dakota Department of Health and has been advised to avoid contact with the community.

Since the recent outbreak of measles related to Disney properties in California was identified, the NDDoH has been working with local public health units and private health care providers to raise awareness of this disease, which has become so rare that many physicians have never seen a case in their practice. As a result of this outreach, North Dakota physicians have been alerted to consider the disease as a diagnosis in patients with symptoms consistent with measles. In the event a positive case would be identified, NDDoH is prepared to work with the health care provider and local public health to investigate contacts, and recommend or implement isolation or quarantine.

“Measles is a virus that causes rash, cough, runny nose, eye irritation and fever,” said Amy Schwartz, immunization surveillance coordinator for the North Dakota Department of Health. “It can lead to ear infection, pneumonia, seizures, brain damage and death. Parents who suspect their child may have measles or adults who are symptomatic should contact their primary care provider before presenting to a clinic or emergency department, in an effort to prevent the spread of the disease in those settings.”

“Measles is highly contagious; ninety percent of unvaccinated people that are exposed to measles will go on to develop the disease,” said Schwartz. “Two doses of MMR vaccine are 97 percent effective at preventing measles.” All children are recommended to be vaccinated against measles at ages 12 to 15 months and 4 to 6 years. Measles is included in a combination vaccine with

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mumps and rubella (known as MMR vaccine). Adults at high risk for measles, including health-care workers, international travelers and college students, should have two doses of MMR vaccine or laboratory evidence of immunity to measles, regardless of age. All other adults born in 1957 or later should have at least one dose of MMR vaccine. Adults born before 1957 are presumed to be immune to measles because the disease was so widespread then that it is likely they were exposed or had the disease. Booster doses of MMR vaccine are not recommended for adults who are not at high risk for measles who have already had at least one dose of MMR vaccine or who were born prior to 1957.

MMR vaccine is required for childcare, school, and college entry in North Dakota. “If a case of measles occurs in a school in North Dakota, the case would be kept out of school until four days after rash onset. All unvaccinated children in that school would be kept out of school for 21 days (incubation period for measles) as a precaution, since they would be likely to develop measles and cases are contagious prior to having a rash,” said Schwartz.

MMR vaccine is available by contacting your primary care provider or local public health unit.

For additional information about measles or MMR vaccination, visit www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/measles/default.htm.

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